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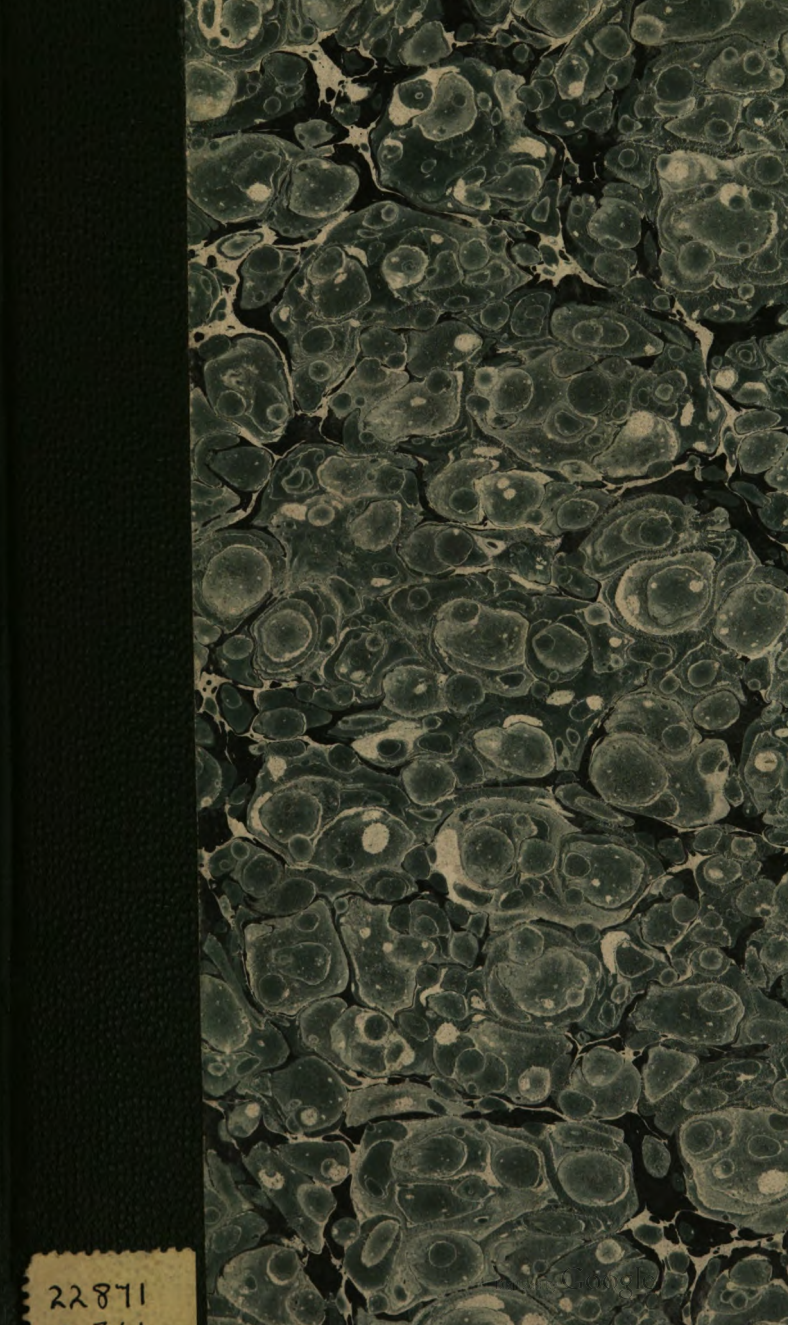
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THREE

LETTERS

TO THE

INDEPENDENT

ELECTORS

OF THE

City of Bristol.

BY WILLIAM COBBETT,

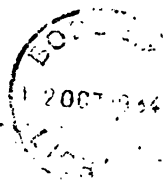
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St. John Cleveland



TO THE

Independent Electors

OF

BRISTOL.

LETTER I.

GENTLEMEN,

YOUR City, the third in England in point of population, and, for the bravery and public spirit of its inhabitants the first in the world, is now become, with all those who take an interest in the public welfare, an object of anxious attention. You, as the Electors of Westminster were, have long been the sport of two artful factions, who have divided between them the profits arising from the obtaining of your votes. One of each faction has always been elected; and, as one of them always belonged to the faction *out of place*, you, whose intentions and views were honest, consoled yourselves with the reflection, that, if one of your members was in place, or belonged to the IN party, your other member, who belonged to the OUT party, was always in the House to watch him. But now, I think, experience must have convinced you, that the OUT, as well as the IN member, was always seeking his own gain at your expense and that of the nation; and that the two factions, though openly hostile to each other, have always been perfectly well agreed as to the main point; namely, the perpetuating of those sinecure places, and all those other means by which the public money is put into the pockets of individuals.

With this conviction in your minds, it is not to be wondered at that you are now beginning to make a stand for the remnant of your liberties; and, as I am firmly persuaded, that your success would be of infinite benefit to the cause of freedom in general, and, of course, to our country, now groaning under a compilation of calamities, I cannot longer withhold a public expression of the sentiments which I entertain, respecting the struggle in which you are engaged; and especially respecting the *election now going on*, the proceedings of a *recent meeting in London*, and the *pretensions of Mr. Hunt*, compared with those of Sir Samuel Romilly.

As to the first, you will bear in mind, Gentlemen, how often we, who wish for a reform of the parliament, have contended, that no member of the House of Commons ought to be a placeman or a pensioner. We have said, and we have shown, that in that Act of Parliament by virtue of which the present family was exalted to the throne of this kingdom; we have shown that, by that Act, it was provided that *no man having a pension, or place of emolument under the Crown, should be capable of being a member of the House of Commons*. It is, indeed, true, that this provision has since been *repealed*; but, it having been enacted, and that too on so important an occasion, shows clearly how jealous our ancestors were upon the subject.—When we ask for a revival of this law, we are told that it cannot be wanted; because, if a man be a placeman or a pensioner *before* he be chosen at all, those who choose him know it, and if they like a placeman or a pensioner, who else has any thing to do with the matter? And, if a man be made a placeman or pensioner *after* he be chosen, he must *vacate his seat*, and return to his constituents to be re-elected before he can sit again; if they reject him he cannot sit, and, if they re-choose him, who else has any thing to do with the matter?

To be sure it is pretty impudent for these people to talk to us about *choice*, and about *re-choosing* and about *rejecting* and the like, when they know that we are well informed of the nature of choosings and re-choosings at Old Sarum, at Gatton, at Queenborough, at Bodmin, at Penryn, at Honiton, at Oakhampton, and at more than a

hundred other places; it is pretty impudent to talk to us about members *going back to their constituents* at such places as here mentioned; but what will even the impudence of these people find to say in the case of those members, who, upon having grasped places or pensions, do go back to their constituents, and upon being rejected by them, go to some borough where the people have no voice; or who, not relishing the prospect, do not go to face their former constituents, but go, at once, to some borough, and there take a seat, which, by cogent arguments, no doubt, some one has been prevailed on to go out of, to make way for them? What will even the impudence of the most prostituted knaves of hired writers find to say in cases like these?

Of the former, Mr. GEORGE TIERNEY presents a memorable instance. He was formerly a member for Southwark, chosen on account of his professions in favor of freedom, by a numerous body of independent electors.—But, having taken a fancy to a place which put some thousands a year of the public money into his own individual pocket, having had the assurance to go back to his constituents, and having been by them *rejected* with scorn, he was immediately *chosen* by some borough where a seat had been emptied in order to receive him, and now he is a representative of the people of a place called *Bandon Bridge, in Ireland*, a place which, in all probability, he never saw, and the inhabitants of which are, I dare say, wholly unconscious of having the honor to be represented by so famous a person. Your late representative, Mr. BRAGGE BATHURST, has acted a more modest, or, at least, a more prudent part. He has got a fat place, a place the profits of which would find some hundreds of Englishmen's families in provisions all the year round; he has been made what is called *Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster*, which will give him immense patronage, and, of course, afford him ample means of enriching his family, friends, and dependents, besides his having held places of great salary for many years before. Thus loaded with riches arising from the public means, he does not, I perceive, intend to *face you*; he cannot, it seems, screw himself up to that pitch. We shall, in all likelihood, see, in a few days, what borough opens its chaste arms to receive him; but, as a

matter of much greater consequence, I now beg to offer you some remarks upon the measures that have been taken to supply his place.

It was announced to his supporters at Bristol, about three months ago, that he did not mean to offer himself for that city again, and Mr. RICHARD HART DAVIS, of whom you will hear enough, came forward as his successor; openly avowing all his principles, and expressly saying, he would tread in his steps. What those steps are, you have seen; and what those principles are, the miserable people of England feel in the effects of war and taxation. But, I beg your attention to some circumstances connected with the Election, which ought to be known and long borne in mind. The WRIT for electing a member for Bristol, in the room of Bragge Bathurst, was moved for, in the House of Commons, on Tuesday evening, the 23d of June, and, at the same moment, a writ for electing a member for Colchester, in the room of Richard Hart Davis, was moved for. So, you see, they both vacate at the same instant; your man not liking to go down to Bristol, the other vacates a seat for another place, in order to go down to face you in his stead. Observe, too, with what *quickness* the thing is managed. Nobody knows, or, at least, none of you know, that Bragge is going to vacate his seat. Davis apparently knew it, because we see him *vacating at the same moment*. The WRIT is sent off the same night; it gets to Bristol on Wednesday morning the 24th; the law requires *four days notice* on the part of the Sheriffs; they give it, and the Election comes on the next Monday. So, you see, if Mr. HUNT had been living in Ireland or Scotland, or even in the Northern counties of England, or in some parts of Cornwall, the Election might have been over, before there would have been a POSSIBILITY of his getting to Bristol. And though his place of residence was within thirty miles of London, he who was at home on his farm, had but just time to reach you soon enough to give you an opportunity of exercising your rights upon this occasion. Mr. Hunt *could* not know that the writ was moved for till Wednesday evening, living, as he does, at a distance from a post town; and, as it happened, he did not know of it, I believe, till Thursday night; so that it was next to impossible for him

to come to London (which, I suppose, was necessary) and to reach Bristol before Saturday. While, on the other hand, Mr. Davis had chosen his time, and, of course, had made all his preparations.

Such, Gentlemen, have been the means used preparatory to the election. Let us now see what a scene your city exhibits at this moment; first, however, taking a look at the *under-plot going on in London*, in favour of Sir Samuel Romilly.

It is stated in the London news-papers, and particularly in the *Times* of Saturday last, that there was a meeting, on Friday, at the Crown and Anchor in the Strand, the object of which meeting was, "to raise money," by subscription for "*supporting the Election of Sir Samuel Romilly, at Bristol*;" and it is added, that a large sum was accordingly raised. This meeting appears to me to have for its object the deceiving of the Electors of Bristol; an object, however, which I am satisfied will not be accomplished to any great extent. I do not mean to say, that Sir Samuel Romilly would use deceit; but, I am quite sure, that there are those who would use it upon this occasion. The truth is, that the raising of these large sums of money (amounting already, they say, to 8,000*l.*) proves that Sir Samuel Romilly does not put his trust in the FREE VOICE of the people of Bristol. At this meeting, Mr. BARING, one of the persons *who makes the loans to the government*, was in the chair.— This alone is a circumstance sufficient to enable you to judge, not only of the *character* of the meeting, but also of what sort of conduct is *expected* from Sir Samuel Romilly, if he were placed in Parliament by the means of this subscription. Mr. WHITBREAD was also at the meeting, and spoke in favour of the subscription. But we must not be carried away by *names*. Mr. Whitbread does many good things; but Mr. Whitbread is not always right. Mr. Whitbread *subscribed to bring Mr. Sheridan in for Westminster*, and was, indeed, the man who caused him to obtain the appearance of a majority; Mr. Whitbread supported that same Sheridan afterwards against Lord Cochrane; and though Mr. Whitbread is so ready to subscribe now, *he refused to subscribe to the Election of Sir Francis Burdett*, notwithstanding the Election was in a city of which he was

an inhabitant and an Elector. These, Gentlemen, are facts of which you should be apprized; otherwise *names* might deceive you.

I beg to observe also, that, at this meeting, there was nothing said about a *parliamentary reform*, without which, you must be satisfied, no good of any consequence can be done. There was, indeed, a Mr. MILLS, who said he came from Bristol, who observed that "the great majority of the inhabitants of Bristol *felt* perfectly convinced of the necessity of SOMETHING LIKE Reform." And is this all? Does your conviction go no farther than this? I remember that, when a little boy, I was crying to my mother for a bit of bread and cheese, and that a journeyman carpenter, who was at work hard by, compassionately offered to *chalk me out a big piece upon a board*. I forget the way in which I vented my rage against him; but the offer has never quitted my memory. Yet, really, this seems to come up to the notion of Mr. Mills: the carpenter offered me SOMETHING LIKE a big piece of bread and cheese. Oh! no, Gentlemen, it is not this *something like* that you want: you want *the thing itself*; and, if Sir Samuel Romilly meant that you should have it, do you believe that neither he, nor any one for him, would have made any specific promise upon the subject? Even after Mr. Mills had said that you wanted *something like* Reform, there was nobody who ventured to say, that Sir Samuel Romilly would endeavour to procure even that for you.—His friends were told, that, if he would distinctly pledge himself to reform, whether *in place* or *out of place*, Mr. Hunt, who only wished to see that measure accomplished, would himself assist in his Election; but, this Sir Samuel Romilly has not done, and, therefore, he is not the man whom you ought to choose, though he is beyond all comparison better than hundreds of other public men, and though he is, in many respects, a most excellent member of parliament. Gentlemen, these friends of Sir Samuel Romilly call upon you to choose him, because he is, they tell you, a decided enemy of the measures of the present ministers. Now, they must very well know, that *all those measures have had the decided support of the parliament*. Well, then, do these his friends allow, that the parliament

are the real representatives of the people, and that they speak the people's voice? If Sir Samuel's friends do allow this, then they do, in fact, say, that he is an enemy to all those measures which the people's voice approves of; and, if they do not allow this; if they say that the parliament do *not* speak the people's voice, and are *not* their real representatives, how can they hope that any man will do you any good, who is not decidedly for *a reform of that parliament*? Let the meeting at the Crown and Anchor answer these questions, or, in the name of decency, I conjure them to hold their tongues, and to put their subscriptions back again into their pockets.

To say the truth, (and this is not a time to disguise it from you) this subscription is a subscription *against*, and not *for*, the freedom of election. If Sir Samuel Romilly's friends were willing to put their trust in the free good wil of the people of Bristol, why raise money in such large quantities, and especially why resort to *party men* and to *loan makers* for this purpose? They will say, perhaps, that the money is intended for the purpose of carrying down the *London voters*, and for that of fetching voters from elsewhere; but, why are they afraid to put their trust in the *resident* voters of Bristol? The object of this subscription is very far indeed from resembling the object of that which was set on foot in Westminster, which was not to gain votes by dint of money, but merely to pay the expenses of printing, of clerks, and other little matters inseparable from an Election at Westminster, and the whole of which did not amount to more than about *eight hundred pounds*; whereas as many thousands are stated to be already subscribed for procuring the election of Sir Samuel Romilly. In short, this attempt of the friends of Sir Samuel Romilly, is like many others that have been made before. It is *purse against purse*.—Mr. PROTHERO has shaken his purse at Sir Samuel; and, as the latter does not choose to engage with his own purse, his friends, with *a loan maker at their head*, came forward to make up a purse for him; and the free and unbought voice of the Electors of Bristol is evidently intended by neither party to have any weight at all in the decision.

Let us now return and take a view of the political picture which Bristol at this moment presents. And, here, the first

observation that strikes one, is, that neither the friends of Sir Samuel Romilly nor the friends of Mr. Prothero say one word in opposition to Mr. HART DAVIS, though he avowedly stands upon the principles of Mr. Bragge and the present Ministers ; though he quitted his canvas about ten weeks ago, to come express to London to vote in favour of the Orders in Council ; and though he now says, that he will tread in the steps of Mr. Bragge. Though they have all this before their eyes, not one single syllable does any one of them utter against the pretensions or the movements of Mr. Davis ; and, though the meeting at the Crown and Anchor took place several days after the Bristol and Colchester writs were moved for, and though the parties at the meeting must necessarily have been well acquainted with all that I have above stated to you upon the subjects of those writs, not one word did they utter against the pretensions of Mr. Davis, nor did they (according to the printed report of their proceedings) even mention his name, or take the smallest of the circumstance, that an Election a little, snug, rotten-borough-like Election, was at that moment, getting up on that very city, for the *Interest* and *honour* of which they were affecting so much concern ! And, can you, then, believe them sincere ? Can you believe, that they have any other view than merely that of securing *a seat for the party* in Bristol ? Can you doubt, that the contest, on their part, is not for the *principle* but for the *seat* ?

Having pointed out this circumstance to your attention, it is hardly necessary for me to advert to the conduct of Mr. Hunt, which in this case in particular, forms a contrast with that of the other parties too striking not to have produced a lasting impression upon your minds. He does not content himself with *talking* about defending your liberties. He *acts* as well as *talks*. He hears that the enemy is in your camp, and he flies to rescue you from his grasp. He does not waste his time in a tavern in London, drawing up flourishing resolutions about "*public spirit*." He hastens amongst you ; he *looks your and his adversary in the face* ; he shows you that you may *depend upon him in the hour of trial*. These, Gentlemen, are marks of such a character in a representative as the times demand. Sir Samuel Romilly is a very worthy gentleman ; an honest man ; a humane man ;

a man that could not, in my opinion, be, by any means, tempted to do a cruel or dishonest act; and he is, too, a man of great talents. But, I have no scruple to say, that I should prefer, and greatly prefer, Mr. Hunt to Sir S. Romilly, as a member of parliament; for, while I do not know, & do not believe, that the latter excels the former in honesty or humanity, I am convinced that his talents, though superior, perhaps, in *their kind* are not equal, in *value to the public*, to the talents possessed by Mr. Hunt, who is, at this moment, giving you a specimen of the effect of those talents,

Gentlemen, the predominance of *Lawyers*, in this country, has produced amongst us a very erroneous way of thinking with respect to the talents of public men; and, contrary to the notions of the world in general, we are apt to think a man great in mind in proportion to the gilbness of his tongue. With us, to be a *great talker* is to be a *great man*; but, perhaps a falser rule of judging never was adopted. It is so far from being true as a general maxim, that it is generally the contrary of the truth; and, if you look back through the list of our own public men, you will find, that, in general, they have been shallow and mischievous in proportion to their gift of talking. We have been brought to our present miserable state by a lawyer-like policy, defended, in lawyer-like debates. Plain good sense has been brow-beaten out of countenance; has been talked down, by the politicians from the bar; haranguing and special pleading and quibbling have usurped the place of frank and explicit statement and unsophistical reasoning. In Mr. Hunt you have no lawyer, but you have a man who is not to be brow-beaten into silence. You have a man not to be intimidated by the frowns or the threats of wealth or of rank; a man not to be induced to abandon his duty towards you from any considerations of danger to himself; and, I venture to foretel (begging that my words may be remembered) that, if you elect him, the whole country will soon acknowledge the benefit conferred on it by the city of Bristol.

Gentlemen, this letter will, in all likelihood, find you engaged in the bustle of an Election. With all the advantages on the side of your adversary, you may not, perhaps, upon the *present* occasion, be able to defeat him. But, you will have a chance; you will have an opportunity of trying;

you will have *an Election*; and this you would not have had if it had not been for Mr. Hunt, for the whole affair would have been over before you had scarcely *heard* of it. At the very least you will have *some days of liberty to speak your minds*; to tell Mr. Davis what you think of him and of his predecessor; to declare aloud your grievances and your indignation; and even for *this* liberty you will be indebted to Mr. Hunt, and *solely* to Mr. Hunt. You are told of the *zeal* of Mr. Protheroe and Sir Samuel Romilly in your service; you are told of their desire to promote your *interest* and your *honour*; but, where are they *now*? Where are they when the enemy is in your city, when you were to have been handed over from Bragge Bathurst to Hart Davis as quietly as if you had been a cargo of tallow or of corn? It is now, it is in this moment of real need, that Mr. Hunt comes to your aid; and, if he fall in defeating, he will, at the least, harass your enemy, make his victory over you *cost* him dear, and by exposing the sources and means of his *success* lay the foundation of his future defeat and disgrace.

I am, your friend,

W^m. COBBETT.

*State Prison, Newgate,
Monday, 29th June, 1812.*

LETTER II.

GENTLEMEN,

IF I have not to congratulate you upon the return of Mr. Hunt as your representative, I may well congratulate you upon the spirit which you have shown during the Election, and upon the prospect of final success from the exertion of a similar spirit. That another contest will take place in a few months there can be no doubt; for, the law allows of no exceptions with regard to the use of soldiers. The ancient common law of England forbade not only the use, but the very *show* of force of any kind, at Elections: and, the act of parliament, made in the reign of King George the Second, is quite positive as to a case like yours. That act, after stating the principle of the Common Law as to soldiers in an Election town, says, that, when an Election is about to take place in any city or borough, wherein there are any soldiers stationed or quartered, the soldiers shall be removed out of the said city or borough; that they shall go out one day at least, before the poll begins; that they shall not return till one day at least, after the poll has closed; that the distance to which they shall be removed, shall be two miles at least. There are a few exceptions, such as Westminster or any other place where the Royal Family may be, who are to have their guards about them, whether there be an Election going on or not; and also, in case of fortified towns, where, though there be an Election going on, soldiers are to remain in sufficient number to take care of the works.

Now, then, as Bristol is neither a place of residence of the Royal Family, nor a fortified town, it is clear, that if

soldiers have been suffered to remain in, or to return to, your city within the period above described, the Election must be void : or, there is, at once, an end to the above-mentioned act of parliament, and also to the ancient common law of England in this respect, and the very show of freedom of Election is gone. It has not only been stated to me from the best authority ; but, it has been stated in print by your well-known enemies, that soldiers were not only brought within the precincts of your city, during the time that the poll was open, but that they actually were stationed, with bayonets fixed, in the very Guildhall ; and, in short, that after the first or second day of the Election, the city was under the controul of military armed men.

This being the case, there can be no doubt of the Election being declared void ; or, if it be not, there will, at any rate, be no disguise ; it will become *openly declared*, that soldiers, under the command of men appointed by the King, and removeable at his sole will, can be, at any time, brought into a place where an Election is going on, and can be stationed in the very building where the poll is taken. Whether, amongst the other strange things of our day, we are doomed to witness this, is more than I can say ; but, at the least, it will be something *decisive* ; something that will speak a *plain language* ; something that will tend to fashion men's minds to what is to come.

But, I have heard it asked : “would you then, in *no case*, have soldiers called in during an Election ? Would you rather see a city *burnt down* ?” Aye would I, & to the very ground ; and, rather than belong to a city where soldiers were to be brought to assist at Elections. I would expire myself in the midst of the flames, or, at least, it would be my duty so to do, though I might fail in the courage to perform it. But *why* should a city be *burnt down*, unless protected by *soldiers* ? Why suppose any such case ? Really, to hear some men talk now-a-days, one would be almost tempted to think that they look upon soldiers as necessary to our very existence ; or, at the least, that they are necessary to keep us in order, and that the people of England, so famed for their good sense, for their public spirit, and their obedience to the laws, are now a set of brutes, to be governed only by force. If there are men who think thus

of the people of England, let them *speak out*; and then we shall know them. Bnt, Gentlemen, it is curious enough, that the very persons, who, upon all occasions, are speaking of the people of England as being so happy, so contented, so much attached to their government, are the persons who represent soldiers as absolutely necessary to *keep this same people in order*!

To hear these men talk, one would suppose, that soldiers as the means of keeping the peace, had always made a part of our government; and, that, as to Elections, there always may have been cases when the calling in of soldiers was necessary. But, the fact is, that soldiers were wholly unknown to the ancient law of England; and, that, as to an *army*, there never was any thing of an army *established* in England till within a hundred years. How was the peace kept *then*? How were riots suppressed in those times? We do not hear of any cities having been burnt at Elections in those days. I will not cite the example of America, where there are Elections going on every year, and where every man who pays a sixpence tax has a vote, and yet where there is not a single soldier in the space of hundreds & thousands of miles; I will not ask how the peace is kept in that country; I will not send our opponents across the Atlantic; I will confine myself to England; and, again I ask, *how the peace was kept in the times when there were no soldiers in England*? I put this question to the friends of Corruption; I put this question to Mr. Mills, of the Bristol Gazette, whose paper applauds the act of introducing the troops. This is my question: how was the peace kept at Elections, how were towns and cities preserved, how was the city of Bristol saved from destruction, *in those days when there were no soldiers in England*? I put this question to the apostles of tyranny and despotic sway; and, Gentlemen, we may wait long enough, I believe, before they will venture upon an answer.

I have heard it asked: "What! would you, then, make an Election void, because soldiers were introduced, though one of the candidates would have been killed, perhaps, without the protection of the bayonet? Would you thus set an Election aside, when it might be evident, that, without the aid of soldiers, the man who has been elected,

"would not, and could not, have been elected, on account
 "of the violence exercised against him? If that be the case,
 "there is nothing to do but to excite great popular violence
 "against a man; for, that being done, you either drive him
 "and his supporters from the polling place, or, if he call in
 "soldiers, you make his Election void." This has a little
 plausibility in it; but, as you will see, it will not stand the
 test of examination. Here is a talk about exciting of violent
 proceedings; here is a talk about burning the city; but, *who*,
 Gentlemen, were to be guilty of these violent proceedings;
who were to burn the city? Not the horses or dogs of Bris-
 tol; not any banditti from a foreign land; not any pirates
 who had chanced to land upon the coast. No, no; but
 "the *rabble*, the *mob*;" and *what* were they? Were they
 a species of monsters, unknown to our ancient laws and to
 the act of George the Second? Or were they men and wo-
 men? If the latter, they were, in fact, *people of Bristol*;
 & the truth is, that if the people of Bristol abhorred a man
 to such a degree that it was unsafe for him or his advocates
 to appear on the hustings, or in the streets; if this was the
 case, it was improper that that man should be elected,
 since it must be clear that, if elected, he must owe his Elec-
 tion to undue, if not corrupt, influence. What! and do the
 advocates of corruption suppose, that our law-makers had
 not this in their view? Is it to be imagined, that they did
 not foresee, and, indeed, that they had not frequently seen,
 that Elections produced fierce and bloody battles? They
 knew it well; and so did the legislators in America; but,
 still they allowed of no use of soldiers. They reasoned
 thus, or, at least, thus they would have reasoned, if any one
 had talked to them of soldiers: 'No, we will have no
 'soldiers. The magistrate has full power to keep the
 'peace at all times, not excepting times of Elec-
 'tion, when assaults and slanders are permitted no
 'more by law than at any other time. The magis-
 'trate has all the constables and other inferior peace officers
 'at his command; he can, if he find it necessary, add to
 'the number of these at his pleasure; and, if the emergen-
 'cy be such as not to allow time for this, he can, by his sole
 'authority, and by virtue of his commission, which is at all
 'times effective, call upon the whole of the people to *aid*
 'and assist him in the execution of his duty, and for refu-

'sing to do which any man is liable to punishment. Having
 'endued the magistrate with these powers; having given
 'him a chozen band of sworn officers, armed with staves;
 'having giving him unlimited power to add to that band;
 'having giving him, in case of emergency, the power of
 'commanding every man, of whatever age or degree, to aid
 'and assist him in the execution of his duty; having thus ar-
 'med the magistrate, how can we suppose him to stand in
 'need of the aid of *soldiers*, without first supposing the
 'country in a state of rebellion, in which case it is nonsense
 'to talk about *elections*. To tell us about the *popular*
 'prejudices excited against a candidate, is to tell us of an
 'insufficient cause even for the calling out of the posse;
 'but, if this prejudice be so very strong, so very general, and
 'so deeply rooted, that the magistrate, with all his ordinary
 'and special constables, and his power to call upon the
 'whole of the people to aid and assist, is unable to protect
 'him from violence, or, is unable to preserve the city against
 'the rage excited by his presence and pretensions; if there
 'be a prejudice like this against a candidate, we are sure
 'that it would be an insult to the common sense of mankind
 'to call such a man, if elected, the *representative* of that
 'city; and, therefore, we will make no new law for fa-
 'voring the Election of such a man.'

Such, Gentlemen, would have been the reasoning of our
 ancestors, such would have been the reasoning of the legis-
 lators of America, if they had been called upon to make a
 law for the introduction of *soldiers at an election*; which,
 let the circumstances of the case be what they may, and let
 the sophistry of the advocates of corruption be what it
 may, is, after all, neither more nor less than the forcing of
 the people to suffer one candidate to be elected and another
 to be set aside. The soldiers do, in fact, decide the contest,
 and cause the return of the sitting member; unless it be
 acknowledged, that his election *could have been effected*
without them; and, then, *where is the justification for*
calling them in? I have heard of nobody who has at-
 tempted to anticipate any other decision than that of a
void Election; and, indeed, who will dare to anticipate any
 other? For, if the return be allowed to stand good in
 favour of Hart Davis, does any man pretend that there can

ever exist a case in which soldiers may not be brought in? They are brought in under the pretence of quelling a riot; under the pretence of their being necessary to preserve the peace; and where is the place where this pretence may not be hatched? It is in any body's power to make a row and a fight during an election at Westminster, for instance: and, of course, according to the Bristol doctrine, it is in any body's power to give the magistrate cause for calling in soldiers, and for posting them even upon the very hustings of Covent Garden. In short, if Hart Davis, his return being petitioned against, be allowed to sit, we can never again expect to see a candidate of that description unsupported by soldiers; and then, I repeat it, the very show, the mere semblance, of freedom of election will not exist.

It being, for these reasons, my opinion that the return of Hart Davis will be set aside, and, of course, that another Election for your city is at no great distance, I shall now take the liberty to offer you my advice as to the measures which you then ought to pursue; first adding to what I said in my last, a few observations relative to Mr. Hunt.

At the close of my last letter I observed to you, that it was owing to this gentleman, and to him alone, that you had *an election*. You now know this well. You have now *seen* what it is to have at your head a man of principle and courage. With all the purses of almost all those in Bristol who have grown rich out of the taxes; with all the influence of all the corrupt; with all the Bristol newspapers, and almost all the London newspapers; with all the Corporation of the City; with all the bigoted Clergy, and all their next a-kin, the pettifogging Attornies; with all the bigots, and all the hypocrites, and all alarmist fools; with all these against him, and with hundreds of bludgeon men to boot; opposed to all this, and to thirty or forty hired barristers and attorneys, Mr. Hunt stood the poll for the thirteen days, in the face of horse and foot soldiers, and that too, without the aid of advocate or attorney, and with no other assistance than what was rendered him by one single friend, who, at my suggestion, went down to him on the sixth or seventh day of the election. Gentlemen, this is, as I verily believe, what no other man in England, whom I know, would have done. There may be others capable of the same exertions; and, let us hope, that Eng-

land does contain some other men able to undergo what he underwent ; but, it falls to the lot of no country to produce *many* such men. At any rate, he has *proved* himself to be the man for you ; he has done for you what none of the mill-sop, miawling orators at Sir Samuel Romilly's meetings would have dared even to think of. *They* talk of freeing the city from the trammels of corruption ; *they* talk of giving you freedom of election ; *they* talk of making a stand for your rights. What stand have they made ? What have you had from them but talk ? They saw the enemy within your walls ; they saw him offer himself for the choice of the people of Bristol ; they saw preparations making for chairing him as your representative on the first day of the election ; and what did *they* do to rescue you from the disgrace of seeing him triumph over you, while you were silent ? Nothing. They did, in fact, sell you to him upon the implied condition, that he, as far as he was able, should sell his followers to them when the time came. You have been saved from that disgrace ; you have had 14 days of your lives wherein to tell your enemies, and the enemies of your country, your minds ; you have had 14 days, during which corruption trembled under your bitter but just reproaches ; you have had 14 days of political instruction and inquiry ; you have had those who affect to listen to your voice 14 days before you, and in the hearing of that voice ; there have been, in your city, 14 days of terror to the guilty part of it. This is a great deal, and for this you are indebted to Mr. Hunt, and to him alone. Your own public virtues, your zeal, activity and courage, and your hatred of your country's enemies did, indeed, enable Mr. Hunt to make the stand ; but, still there wanted such a man as Mr. Hunt ; without such a man the stand could not have been made ; without such a man you could not have had an opportunity of giving utterance to the hatred which you so justly feel against the supporters of that corruption, the consequences of which you so sorely feel.

That a man, who was giving such annoyance to the corrupt, should pass without being calumniated, was not to be expected. Every man who attacks corruption, who makes war upon the vile herd that live upon the people's labour, every such man must lay his account with being calumniated ; he must expect to be the object of the bitterest

and most persevering malice; and, unless he has made up his mind to the enduring of this, he had better, at once, quit the field. One of the weapons which corruption employs against her adversaries, is calumny, secret as well as open. It is truly surprising to see how many ways she has of annoying her foes, and the artifices to which she stoops to arrive at her end. No sooner does a man become in any degree formidable to her, than she sets to work against him in all the relationships of life. In his profession, his trade, his family; amongst his friends, the companions of his sports, his neighbours, and his servants. She eyes him all round, she feels him all over, and, if he has a vulnerable point, if he has a speck, however small, she is ready with her stab. How many hundreds of men have been ruined by her without being hardly able to perceive, much less name, the cause; and how many thousands, seeing the fate of these hundreds, have withdrawn from the struggle, or have been deterred from taking part in it.

Mr. Hunt's *separation from his wife*, presented too fair a mark to be for a moment overlooked; but required the *canting crew*, with a Mr. Charles Elton at their head, to give to this fact that deformity which it has been made to receive. Gentlemen, I wish to be clearly understood here. I do not think lightly of such matters. When a man separates from his wife, there must always be ground for regret; it is a thing always to be lamented; and if fault in this case, was on the side of Mr. Hunt, it is a fault, which even in our admiration of his public conduct, we ought by no means to endeavor to paliate. But, Gentlemen, I do not & the public cannot, know what was the *real cause* of the separation, of which so much has been said. Mr. Hunt has, upon no occasion that I have heard of, attempted to justify his conduct in this respect, by stating the reasons of the separation; but I am sure you are too just to conclude from *that circumstance*, that the fault was wholly his. It is impossible for the public to know the facts of such a case. They cannot enter into a man's family affairs. The tempers and humours of wives and of husbands nobody but those wives and husbands know. They are, in many cases, unknown even to domestic servants and to children; and, is it not,

then, the height of presumption for the public to pretend to any knowledge of the matter?

But, be the facts of the case what they may, I am quite sure, that as a candidate for a seat in parliament, they have nothing to do with the pretensions of Mr. Hunt, any more than they would have had to do with his claims to a title for having won the battle of Trafalgar. There is a Mr. Walker, who, I think, is an Attorney at Bristol who has written a pamphlet against Mr. Hunt, in which pamphlet he argues thus: 'Mr. Hunt has, by quitting his wife, to live with another woman, broken his plighted vows to his own wife; a man who will break his promises in one case will break them in another case; and, therefore, as Mr. Hunt has broken his promises to his wife, *he will break his promises to the people of Bristol.*' These are not Mr. Walker's words, but you have here his reasoning, & from it you may judge of the shifts to which Mr. Hunt's adversaries are driven. As well might Mr. Walker tell you that you will break any promise that you make to your neighbours, because you have not wholly renounced the Devil and all his works and all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, as you, in your baptism, promised and vowed to do. If Mr. Walker's argument were a good one, a man who lives in a state of separation from his wife ought to be regarded as a man dead in law; or, rather, as a man excommunicated by the Pope. If his promises are good for nothing when made to electors, they are good for nothing when made to any body else. He cannot, therefore, be a proper man for any one to deal with; and, in short, he ought to be put out of the world, as being a burden and a nuisance in it.

There is something so absurd, so glaringly stupid, in this, that it is hardly worth while to attempt a further exposure of it, or I might ask the calumniating crew, who accused Mr. Hunt of *disloyalty*, whether they are ready to push their reasoning and their rules up to *peers* and *princes* and to assert that they ought to be put out of power if they cease to live with their wives. They would say, no; and that their doctrine was intended to apply only to those who had the boldness to attack corruption. The man who does that is to be as pure as snow; he is to have no faults at all. He is to be a *perfect Saint*; nay, he is to be a great deal

more, for he is to have no human being, not even his wife, to whisper a word to his disadvantage. "You talk of mending the *constitution*," said an Anti-jacobin to Dr. Jebb when the latter was very ill, "mend *your own* ; and I have heard it seriously objected to a gentleman that he signed a petition for a reform of parliament while there needed a reformation amongst his servants, one of whom had assisted to burden the parish ; just as if he had on that account less right to ask for a full and fair representation of the people ! After this, who need wonder if he were told not to talk against rotten boroughs while he himself had a rotten tooth, or endeavour to excite a clamour against corruption when his own flesh was every day liable to be corrupted to the bone ?

After this, Gentleman, I trust that you are not to be cheated by such wretched cant. With Mr. Hunt's family affairs you and I have nothing to do, any more than he has with ours. We are to look to his conduct as a public man, and, if he serve us in that capacity he is entitled to our gratitude. Suppose, for instance, the plague were in Bristol, and the only physician who had skill and courage to put a stop to its ravages, was separated from his wife and living with the wife of another man ; would you refuse his assistance ? Would you fling his prescriptions into the kennel ? Would the canting Messrs. Mills and Elton and Walker exclaim, '(no ! we will have none of your aid ; we will die rather than be saved by you, who have broken your marriage vows ! ' Would they say this ? No ; but would crawl to him, would supplicate him, with tears in their eyes. and yet, suffer me to say, Gentleman, that such a physician in a plague would not be more necessary in Bristol than such a man as Mr. Hunt now is ; and that the family affairs of a Member of parliament is no more a matter of concern with his constituents than are the family affairs of a physician a matter of concern with his patients. When an important service had been received from either, it would be pleasanter for the benefited party to reflect that the party conferring the benefit was happy in his family ; but, if the case were otherwise, to suppose the benefit less real, or the party conferring it entitled to less gratitude, is something

too monstrously absurd to be entertained by any man of common sense.

The remainder of my subject I must reserve for another Letter, and in the mean while, I am, Gentlemen, your sincere friend,

Wm. COBBETT.

Botley, July 27, 1812.

LETTER III.

GENTLEMEN,

BEFORE I resume the subject, upon which I addressed you in my last, give me leave to explain to you what I mean by an *independent elector*. I do not mean a man who has money or land enough to make him independent; for, I well know, that money and land have no such effect; as we see, every day of our lives, very rich men, and men of what is called family too, amongst the meanest and most dirty dependants of the ministry or the court. Independence is in the mind; and I can call independent that man, who is, at all times, ready to sacrifice a part at least, of what he has, and to brave the anger and resentment of, those from whom he derives his living, rather than act, in his public capacity, contrary to the dictates of his own mind. This is what I mean by an independent man. The journeyman who carries all his fortune in a silk handkerchief is as likely to be an independent man as is a Lord or a Squire; and, indeed, we find him much oftener worthy of the name.

It is to men of this description that I address myself upon the present occasion, and to their attention I now beg leave to recall some of the circumstances of the late election at Bristol, or rather, the late *contest*; for, according to my notion of the law, there can be *no election* where soldiers are present during any portion of the time from the beginning to the end of the poll.

Of the two candidates, generally, I have spoken before; but, I now wish to draw your attention more particularly to

the pledges tendered you, and given you by Mr. Hunt.— He promised and vowed three things: 1st. That he never would, as long as he lived, either directly or indirectly, pocket a single farthing of the *public money*. 'This, Gentlemen, is, with me, and so, I trust, it is with you, a capital point. Indeed, it always appears to me necessary to the safety of the electors, as far as the fidelity of their member goes. If the man elected can take the public money, is not the temptation too great for most men? In short, what can be more absurd, what can be more revolting to reason, what more shocking to common sense, than the idea of a man's being a *guardian of the public purse*, while, at the same time, he votes, in that capacity, part of the people's money into his own pocket? In all other situations of life we see the payer and receiver a check upon each other: but, in the case of a member of parliament who receives part of the public money, there is no such check.

We are often asked, whether we would wish gentlemen of great talents to serve the country as Secretaries of State, Chancellors of the Exchequer, &c. &c. without any pay? To which I, for myself, answer *no*. I would not only have them paid, but *well paid*; but I would not have them sit in parliament while they received the pay. If we are told, that this is *impracticable*, we point to the experience in its support; for in the United States of America, there are no paid officers in the Legislature. No man can be a member of either House who is in the receipt of a sixpence of the public money under the Executive; and, what is more, he cannot receive any of the public money, in the shape of salary, during the time for which he has been elected, if the office from which the salary is derived has been created or its income increased since his election. This is the case in America. There are no chancellors of the exchequer, no secretaries of state, or of war, or of the admiralty, in either House of Congress; there is no *Treasury Bench*; there are no ministers and none of those other things of the same kind, and which I will not here name. Yet is America now exceedingly well governed; the people are *happy and free*; there are about *eight millions* of them, and there are no *paupers*; in that country poor men do not, to be sure, crawl almost on their bellies before the rich; but, there are very

few murders; I lived eight years in the largest city in the country, and there was no human being *hanged*, or otherwise put to death for a crime while I lived there. The country therefore must be pretty well governed, and yet there is no member of either House of Legislature who is in any office whatever under government. The members are *paid for their time*, and paid their expences to and from the place of sitting. They are appointed by the people and paid by the people; they are the people's representatives, and are not suffered to be the servants of, or to receive pay from, any body else.

Here then we have a proof, an experimental proof, of the practicability of conducting a government without giving placemen seats in the Legislature. And though the *positive pledge* may, in all cases, not be insisted on, the principle ought to be clearly understood; and, where the candidate is not very well known indeed, & has not had *long trial*, I am for insisting upon the positive pledge. This pledge Mr. Hunt has given you; and you must be well assured, that if he were disposed to break it, he would not dare to do it. For this alone I should prefer him to either of the other candidates, both of whom, all three of whom, you may be assured, have in view either *public money* or *title*, both of which Mr. Hunt disclaims.

The 2d pledge that Mr. Hunt has given you, is, that he will endeavour, if elected, to do away all the sinecure places, and all the pensions not granted for real services. This is a pledge which I deem of great importance. The sum of money expended *annually* in this way has been stated by Sir Francis Burdett at nearly a *million of pounds sterling*, that is to say, a sum sufficient to maintain 125, 000 poor people all the year round, supposing them not to labour at all. I, for my part, should deem the abolition of these places and pensions of far greater importance to us than the gaining of a hundred battles by land or sea.

The 3d pledge of Mr. Hunt is, that he will, if elected, do all that in him lies to procure for the nation a *peace* and a *reform of parliament*. Now, Gentlemen, look back for the last 20 years; reflect on what has passed during that time; and then say, whether you sincerely believe, that this nation can possibly continue in its present course much long-

er. The finger of wisdom, of common sense, points to peace as the only possible means of rescuing ourselves from our dangers ; but, Gentlemen, *how are we to have peace ?* The terms offered by the Emperor of France are fair ; they are indeed, such as I never expected to see obtained at the close of a negotiation ; they would, if accepted of, leave us in possession of all our conquests, of all the Islands in the West Indies ; of the exclusive fishery of Newfoundland ; of the Cape of Good Hope and the French Settlements in Senegal ; of the French and Dutch Settlements in the East Indies ; of the Isles of France and Bourbon ; in short, they would leave us in possession of about 40 millions of conquered people, while France herself would not possess above 17 or 18 millions of conquered people. And, which is never to be forgotten, they would leave in our hands the island of Malta itself, which, as you well know, was *the avowed object of the war.*

Why, then, have we not peace ? *Because we have not reform,* it being absolutely impossible, in my opinion, for our present internal system to be continued during a peace, which should be accompanied with the usual consequences of peace. When the present war began, it was stated by the then Minister, Addington, that *we were at war because we could not be at peace ;* and, I suppose the same reason would now be given ; for otherwise it is, I think, impossible to account for the rejection of the late overtures of the Emperor Napoleon, which, as I have, I am persuaded, clearly shown in a former Register, were both honourable and advantageous to England. Not only, therefore, will this country, in my opinion, never regain its former state of freedom and happiness without a reform of parliament ; but, I am convinced that, without such reform, it will never again have peace with France.

This being the case, it must be an inexcusable folly for you to elect any man who is not decidedly for a reform of the parliament ; and, amongst all your candidates, Mr. Hunt is the only man who has declared for that reform. The partisans of Sir Samuel Romilly say, that they doubt not that *he will* declare for reform. I differ from them in opinion. I do not think that he ever will ; at least, not till such men as Mr. Hunt shall have made it *inconvenient* to

be against reform. If Sir Samuel Romilly were for reform, why should he be so loath to make the declaration? He has told you, that those who promise most perform least; but, if this were to be taken as a rule without an exception, there would, at once, be an end of all promises and engagements between man and man. In this case, however, the rule did not apply; for he might have expressed his wish to see reform take place, without making any promise upon the subject. This he did not do; and, during the whole time that he has been a candidate for Bristol, he has not once *mentioned*, in any way, the subject of parliamentary reform.

There is, besides, with regard to Sir Samuel Romilly, a most suspicious circumstance; and that is, that his leading partisans all belong to that corrupt faction, which has been designated under the name of *Whigs*, and which faction is, if possible, more hostile to reform than the followers of Pitt and Perceval themselves. I have frequently asserted, that the two factions cordially unite upon all occasions, where an attack is made upon corruption in general, or where the interests of *party* are concerned. We saw them join hand-in-hand and heart to heart when the late Perceval and Castlereagh were accused by Mr. Madocks, on the 11th of May, 1809, on the anniversary of which day Perceval was shot, at the door of the very place where he had before triumphed. We saw them join in rallying round that same Perceval when Sir Francis Burdett was sent to the Tower under the escort of thousands of soldiers. We saw them join in reprobating the Address to the Prince Regent proposed by Sir Francis Burdett. In short, upon all occasions when something was to be effected hostile, decidedly hostile, to the people, the two factions have cordially joined; they have, for the time, become one. They hate one another; they would destroy one another; but, they love the public money more than they hate one another; and, therefore, when the *system* is in danger, they always unite. They cordially unite also against every man who is hostile to the system. They hate him even more than they hate each other; because he would destroy the very meat that they feed on.

Hence, Gentlemen, the united rancour of the factions against Mr. Hunt, and their united approbation of Mr. Bathurst. But, of this latter we must take more particular notice. There has appeared in the Bristol newspapers a publication respecting a Meeting for the purpose of uniting in a testimony of gratitude to Bragge Bathurst. At this meeting the following resolutions were passed; but, I beg you to observe, first, the language and sentiments of the resolutions, and next, who were the principal actors in the scene. The whole of the publication was as follows:—“At a General Meeting of the Merchants, Tradesmen, and other Inhabitants of this City, convened by the public advertisement, for the purpose of uniting in testimony of *gratitude* to their late *Representative*, the Right Hon. Charles Bathurst,—THOMAS DANIEL, Esq. in the chair—the following Resolutions were moved by *Michael Castle*, Esq. and seconded by *John Cave*, Esq. and carried unanimously:—1st, That the conduct of the Right Hon. Charles Bathurst has been distinguished, during 18 years that he represented this City in Parliament, by a *meritorious attention to its local interest, and an invariable zeal for the individual concerns of its inhabitants*, entirely independent of every consideration of political party.—2d, That in the *retirement* of the Rt. Hon. Chas. Bathurst from that elevated situation which he so deservedly held amongst us, we feel desirous of testifying, in this public manner, *the gratitude we entertain for services that have reflected so much honour upon his abilities and exertions*.—3d That, a Subscription be now entered into, for the purpose of presenting the Right Honourable Charles Bathurst with a permanent Token of our esteem and approbation of services that have been so frequently called upon, and attended to with so much alacrity on his part, and with so much advantage to the city at large.—4th, That a Committee be appointed of those gentlemen who signed the requisition for the call of this meeting, together with any of those who may be subscribers, for the purpose of carrying into execution the wishes and intentions of this meeting.—5th, That the name of Mr. Robert Bruce be added to the Twenty Gentlemen who have signed the requisition, for the purpose of forming a Committee, with

"any other of the Subscribers.—6th, That Mr. Thomas Hellicar be requested to take upon himself the office of Treasurer.—THOMAS DANIEL, Chairman."

Now, Gentlemen, you will observe, that here is as decided praise as men can bestow. Mr. Bragge is praised for his *eighteen years' conduct*, though, during that time, he has been doing every thing which the supporters of Sir Samuel Romilly affect to disapprove of. To describe his conduct under three heads, it has been this: he has uniformly supported Pitt and the war; he has uniformly *distinguished* himself as an opponent of Parliamentary Reform, and was one of the foremost in reprobating Mr. Madock's motion; he has, during the 18 years of war and national misery, been a great part of the time a placeman, and he is now a placeman in possession of a rich sinecure, with immense patronage attached to it. And, it is for *conduct like this* that these townsmen of yours are about to give a testimony of their *gratitude*!

If, however, this were confined to the friends of Bragge Bathurst, to those who profess his principles, all would be in its place, all would be natural enough. But, you will bear in mind, Gentlemen, that the two factions have united here, and that these resolutions, extolling to the skies a sinecure placeman, a Pittite, and a known and decided enemy of reform of parliament; you will bear in mind that these resolutions were *moved* by Mr. MICHAEL CASTLE, the very man who introduced Sir Samuel Romilly into your city; the very man in whose carriage Sir Samuel Romilly entered your city; the very man who filled the chair at Sir Samuel Romilly's dinner. This was the man selected to *MOVE* resolutions expressive of the gratitude of the people of Bristol for the conduct of Bragge Bathurst, the sinecure placeman, the supporter of Pitt and the war, and the decided and distinguished enemy of parliamentary reform. This was the man, this Mr. Michael Castle, to tell the world in the most solemn manner, that the friends of Sir Samuel Romilly approved of the conduct of the very man whom they, when canvassing you for your votes, represented as unfit to be your member.

Gentlemen, can you want any further proof of the political hypocrisy of such men as Mr. Charles Elton, and Mr.

Mills, and Mr. Castle? Can you be made to believe that they are sincere when they tell you that they wish for a reform of any sort? The truth is, they wish to put in a member of their own, that they may enjoy the benefit of his patronage; but, in doing this, they must take care not to do any thing hostile to the *system*, for without the existence of that, all their prospects are blasted. You see that they have, in these resolutions, no scruple to declare the vile and abominable principle upon which they act. They here most explicitly avow, that they are grateful to Bragge Bathurst for the zeal he has shown in the *individual concerns* of his constituents. That is to say, in getting *them places under the Government*; or, in other words, in enabling them to live upon the taxes; that is to say, upon the fruit of the people's labour. I told you, in my first letter, that they had no other object than this in view; that one part of them only wanted to put in Sir Samuel Romilly, that he might give them more of the taxes than they had been able to get from Bragge Bathurst. Mr. Hunt had told you this before; and now you see the fact openly avowed. The jobbers on both sides plainly tell whoever is to be their candidate, that he must take care of their *individual concerns*.

This, Gentlemen, is the real cause of the hatred, the rancour, the poisonous malice of both factions towards Mr. Hunt, who makes open war upon the tax eaters. This is the reason why they hate him. There are other reasons, but this is the great reason of all; and you may be well assured, that you will see both the factions always unite against any man, be he who he may, who is opposed to the system of places and pensions. But what, then, must be the extent of the hypocrisy of the friends of Sir Samuel Romilly! They pretend that they wish for a reform of parliament, when they must well know, that such a reform would totally destroy the very root whence spring those *individual benefits*, for which they express their gratitude to Bragge Bathurst. Sir Samuel Romilly, as I had before the honour to observe to you, has never told you that he is for a reform of the parliament; and, after the publication of these resolutions, moved by the man who introduced him into your city, there are very few amongst you, I trust,

who will not be convinced, that his partisans are well convinced that he will not support such a reform, as shall give us a chance of destroying that corruption which is now eating out the very vitals of the country.

Clear as it is then, that both the factions are your enemies, I hope that you will stand firmly by each other in opposition to so detestable an union. Both factions are hateful; but of the two the Whigs are the worst; because they disguise their hostility to the cause of freedom. Take, however, only a little time to reflect, and you will not be deceived by the cant of Mr. Charles Elton and Mr. Mill, both of whom, I would venture my life, have bespoke places for themselves in case of success to their candidate. They well know that the success of Mr. Hunt would defeat their scheme, and *therefore* they hate him. They do not dislike him for his separation from his wife; they would not give his wife a bit of bread to save her life, if she was a beggar, instead of being, as she is, well and liberally provided for; they would see her drop from their door dead in the street, rather than tender her a helping hand; but, to speak of the separation suits the turn of the hypocrites; by having recourse to it, they can cast calumny on their foe without letting their real motive appear. They would, if they dared, tell him that he is a cruel savage for endeavouring to prevent them from pocketing the public money; but this would not suit their purpose; and they therefore resort to his separation from his wife.

Trusting now, Gentlemen, that you see clearly the motives of the two factions, and that their main object is to get at a share of the public money, I shall not fear, that, at another election, you will *resolutely* endeavour to defeat that vile object. The whole mystery lies here. It is the public money that the factions want to get at. They are not attached to any particular set of men or of means. Whoever or whatever will give them the best chance of getting at the public money is the man or the thing for them; and Sir Samuel Romily has been brought forward upon the recent occasion, only because there was a set of men, who found that they could not get so much of the public money as they wanted under any of the other candidates. They found the old ground too thickly settled for them; they therefore re-

solved to get new ground of their own ; and they chose Sir Samuel Romily, because he was at once likely to be a placemen, and was at the same time a man of a good deal of deserved popularity. They if he were elected, would say as Falstaff did of the moon : “ the *chaste* Diana, under whose influence *we steal*.” They mean to make a passage of him through which to get at the people’s earnings ; and all this, too, under the *guise* of *virtue* and *patriotism*. With me there wanted nothing to produce conviction of this fact before ; and now, I trust, that there is no man who will affect to doubt it ; now when we see them moving and signing resolutions, applauding the conduct of a member of parliament who has become a *secure* placeman, and who is notoriously a most decided enemy of reform in parliament.

With these facts before him, it is not to be believed, that any one man amongst you will give his vote for this hypocritical faction. If Sir Samuel Romily will declare openly for a reform of parliament, you will do well to vote for him and for Mr. Hunt ; but, if he will not, it is your duty not only not to vote for him, but to do all that lies in your power to prevent his being elected ; for, be you well assured that, without a reform in parliament, no man living can save this country, or render it any essential service. There is no national evil that we feel, be it small or great, which may not be traced to a want of parliamentary reform, and such a reform, too, as shall cut up corruption by the roots.

It is with great pleasure that I perceive, that Mr. Hunt has promised you to be a candidate at Bristol at every future election, as long as he has life and health, unless he should be a member when a vacancy takes place for your city.— This promise ensures you *an election* ; it secures you against being sold like *dumb creatures* ; it secures you the *exercise* of your right of voting, and the right of now and then openly reproaching and loading with just maledictions any of the wretches who may betray you. To be a member for Bristol, in future, a man must stand an *election* of some days, at any rate ; no one will be able to get in by a mere day’s parade ; an election at Bristol will not be in future a ceremony like that of choosing a churchwarden ; your voices will be heard, and I hope, they will always carry terror to the hearts of the corrupt. You have only to *persevere*. To

keep steadily on. To suffer nothing to turn you aside. Your enemies cannot kill you, nor can they do you any harm. If they collect and publish lists of *your names*; you will do well to collect and publish lists of *theirs*, and then stand your chance for the *final effect*. But above all things, be upon your guard against the fraudulent dealings of the Whigs, who are the worst faction of the two because they are the greatest hypocrites. They make use of the name of Sir Samuel Romilly as the means of deceiving you, and of getting a share of the public money into their own pockets; and of this fact I beg you never to lose sight.

I am, Gentlemen, your friend,
WM. COBBETT.

Botley, Tuesday,
11th August, 1812.



FINIS.

Gye, Printer, Bath.

